

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 17846

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: VENICE MAKES ITS OWN HISTORIC "MINI" COMPROMISE

SUMMARY: THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY IN THE VENICE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT HAS REACHED AGREEMENT WITH THE COMMUNIST PARTY TO COLLABORATE ON MAJOR MUNICIPAL LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMS ALTHOUGH THE COMMUNIST PARTY WILL NOT BE BROUGHT INTO THE CENTER-LEFT VENICE MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT. THIS "HISTORIC COMPROMISE" IN VENICE HAS DIRECT SIGNIFICANCE ONLY LOCALLY. HOWEVER IT HAS HAD CONSIDERABLE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL. END SUMMARY.

1. ON DECEMBER 23, MAYOR GIORGIO LONGO OF VENICE ANNOUNCED AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE LOCAL CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS (DC) AND THE COMMUNISTS (PCI) FOR COLLABORATION TO CONFRONT THE MAJOR PROBLEMS OF THE CITY, PARTICULARLY THE PROGRAM TO ARREST THE LONG TERM DETERIORATION OF THE CITY WHICH HAS THREATENED THE SURVIVAL OF THE HISTORIC CENTER. WHILE THE PCI WILL NOT BE BROUGHT INTO THE VENICE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL, THEIR COOPERATION WILL BE SOUGHT AND GIVEN IN FORMULATING MAJOR MUNICIPAL PROGRAMS. THE PACT WAS APPROVED IN THE VENICE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL BY THE THREE-PARTY CENTER-LEFT MAJORITY (DC, SOCIALISTS AND SOCIAL DEMOCRATS) AND THE PCI. THE LIBERALS AND NEO-FASCISTS VOTED AGAINST, WHILE THE REPUBLICAN PARTY (PRI) ABSTAINED.

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2. AS COULD BE EXPECTED, THE FORMAL DC/PCI AGREEMENT TO COLLABORATE PUT THE CAT AMONG THE PIGEONS NATIONALLY. THE PACT WAS DENOUNCED BY THE CONSERVATIVES AND HAILED BY THE LEFT WING. THE DC AND THE SOCIALISTS (PSI) SHOWED MIXED FEELINGS, WHILE THE SOCIAL DEMOCRATS (PSDI) ATTEMPTED TO PUT AS GOOD A FACE AS POSSIBLE ON THE EVENT WHICH WAS OBVIOUSLY PAINFUL TO THE STRONGLY ANTI-COMMUNIST SOCIAL DEMOCRAT NATIONAL ORGANIZATION.

3. WITHIN THE DC THE LEFT WING WAS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED. MAYOR LONGO HIMSELF BELONGS TO THE LEFT WING DC FORZE NUOVE FACTION. THE DC PARTY ORGAN IL POPOLO INITIALLY TRIED TO KEEP THE INCIDENT IN PERSPECTIVE BUT THEN CARRIED AN ARTICLE, UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN BY PARTY SECRETARY FANFANI, INDICATING THE CLEAR DISAPPROVAL OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. WITHIN THE SOCIALIST PARTY THE MODERATE DE MARTINO FACTION PLAYED THE STORY STRAIGHT. THE PSI LEFT-WING LOMBARDI FACTION (E.G., CLAUDIO SIGNORILE) WAS UNRESTRAINED IN ITS APPROVAL.

4. WE HAVE SEEN NO CLEAR EXPLANATION IN THE PRESS AS TO WHY MAYOR LONGO WOULD HAVE DECIDED AT THIS PARTICULAR TIME TO ROCK THE BOAT SO VIOLENTLY. DURING THE RELATIVELY QUITE HOLIDAY SEASON THE VENICE DC ACTION RECEIVED MORE PRESS PLAY THAN IT MAY HAVE DESERVED. IN ANY CASE IT APPEARED UN-NECESSARY, AS THE THREE-PARTY CENTER-LEFT MAJORITY IN VENICE HAD THE VOTES, ON PAPER, TO MOVE ITS OWN PROGRAM FORWARD WHETHER OR NOT THE PCI CONCURRED. MAYOR LONGO, OF COURSE, AS A LEFT WINGER, MADE HIS OWN SATISFACTION WITH THE PACT EVIDENT IN HIS PRESENTATION. THIS WAS UNDERSTANDABLE AND IN LINE WITH FORZE NUOVE VIEWS THAT THE HISTORIC COMPROMISE IS THE WAVE OF THE FUTURE IN ITALIAN POLITICS. AS IT TURNS OUT, THERE WERE OTHER FACTORS, HOWEVER, THAT STRENGTHENED LONGO'S HAND IN HIS INITIATIVE.

5. AMCONSUL MILAN REPORTS THAT THE LOMBARDI FACTION OF THE PSI IN VENICE IN FACT HELD THE CENTER-LEFT CITY GOVERNMENT TO RANSOM. THE VENICE PSI LOMBARDIANI SUPPORTED THEIR OWN FACTION AND THE CENTER-LEFT FORMULA IN EVERY FORMAL SENSE, BUT REFUSED TO VOTE WITH THE PARTY AND THE

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MAJORITY IN THE VENICE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL ON THE ISSUE OF THE USE OF A ONE HUNDRED BILLION LIRE (\$150 MILLION) GOI GRANT TO STOP THE STEADY DECAY OF THE HISTORIC CENTER OF VENICE. PROGRESS IN ADOPTING A CITY PLAN TO UTILIZE THE GOI FUNDS IN DEFENSE OF THE DECAYING CITY HAD BEEN BLOCKED FOR TWO YEARS, AND AT LEAST ONE SOURCE REPORTS THAT THE GOI GRANT WOULD HAVE BEEN LOST IF NOT UTILIZED SHORTLY. UNDER THIS PRESSURE IT APPEARS THAT MAYOR LONGO WAS ABLE

TO GO THE ROUTE HE WISHED TO TAKE, WITH MINIMUM RISK OF CENSURE BY THE DC CENTRAL APPARATUS.

6. ONE SOURCE IN ROME CLOSE TO FANFANI, HOWEVER, PREDICTS THAT LONGO WILL NOT GET AWAY WITH IT. OUR SOURCE SAYS THAT THE "MINI COMPROMISE", AS IT HAS BEEN DUBBED, SERVED ITS PURPOSE BY OBTAINING THE APPROVAL (ON DECEMBER 30) OF THE DETAILED PACKAGE WHICH WAS HURRIDLY REVIEWED AND REVISED TO MEET THE APPROVAL OF BOTH THE DC AND PCI COUNSELORS IN VENICE IN TIME TO BE PASSED BY THE END OF THE YEAR. OUR SOURCE SAYS THAT THE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL DECISION WILL NOW BE PASSED TO THE REGIONAL AUTHORITIES FOR REVIEW, AND AFTER A DECENT INTERVAL (HE SUGGESTED 30 DAYS) LONGO'S MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT WILL BE QUIETLY FORCED TO RESIGN, THUS EFFECTIVELY TERMINATING THE MINI COMPROMISE.

7. COMMENT: WHETHER OR NOT MAYOR LONGO'S MINI-COMPROMISE LASTS, ITS EFFECT CANNOT BE EASILY DISMISSED. THE ARGUMENT WILL BE MADE THAT MAYOR LONGO ACTED UNDER FORCE MAJEURE AND THAT, AS ACTION ON THE PLAN TO SAVE VENICE COULD NOT BE POSTPONED, THE SITUATION FULLY JUSTIFIED SHORT TERM COLLABORATION WITH THE PCI. SOME, NOT ALL, WILL ACCEPT THIS ARGUMENT. THOSE WHO DO WILL NOT HAVE DIFFICULTY FINDING POLITICAL QUESTIONS ON THE NATIONAL SCALE FULLY AS URGENT AS THE VENETIAN PLAN WAS LOCALLY. THE ECONOMIC CRISIS COMES EASILY TO MIND. AT THE SAME TIME, FANFANI'S FACTION AND THE OTHER CENTER AND CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT ELEMENTS ARE FOREWARNED, AND THEIR OPPOSITION TO COOPERATION WITH THE PCI REMAINS FIRM. VOLPE

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